

**Rio Grande, Rio Grande Estuary, and Lower Laguna Madre
Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee (BBASC)
Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
Transportation Center
Weslaco, Texas
February 28, 2011 9:00**

MINUTES

Introductions

Committee chairman Tony Reisinger called the meeting to order. Members introduced themselves.

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

Approval of January 25, 2011 meeting minutes

The minutes from the January 25, 2011 meeting were approved with a slight revision to include member Michael McCulloch's recommendation that Texas A&M Agrilife – El Paso, United States Geological Survey (USGS), International Boundary and Water Commission – US Section (USIBWC), and Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) be considered as BBEST candidates.

Science Advisory Committee remarks – Bob Brandes

Dr. Bob Brandes, vice-chair of the state-wide Science Advisory Committee (SAC), provided a brief overview of the role the SAC plays and the charge and duties of the Basin and Bay Expert Science Teams (BBESTs). He noted that the BBASC charge is to consider other factors beyond science when reviewing the BBEST recommendations, and use of Water Availability Models will be necessary in evaluating the other factors. He stated that Rio Grande water is fully appropriated in terms of water rights and that no future water rights could be issued due to the fact. He noted that if there were to be an environmental flow need it could only be applied in the Presidio to Amistad stretch.

As such he recommended that the committee consider limiting the geographic scope of their deliberations to the Presidio to Amistad stretch, which would include inflows from both the Pecos and Devils rivers. Members questioned whether this approach could be used and Dr. Brandes suggested that it could but the group would want to get an opinion from the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG).

Members discussed this approach and agreed that while freshwater inflows may not be available the BBEST could identify environmental flow needs, including water quality, which might be addressed by the work plan component.

Discussion of funds available to the Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST)

Ruben Solis, TWDB, explained that the current versions of the house and senate budget don't include funding for the BBESTs. Currently the BBESTs have \$148,000 available to them through August 31, 2011. Funding will cover meeting time, travel expenses, and could be available to contract out certain work if approved by the BBEST. He noted that the BBEST will need to develop a budget which will need to be approved by the EFAG.

The members discussed the available budget and how the BBEST might operate considering the funding and time limitations. A phased approach to BBEST recommendation development was discussed. Ultimately the members agreed to form two BBESTs. An upper group dedicated to instream flows in the Presidio/Amistad reach, and a lower group dedicated to freshwater inflows, with 6 appointees to each group. Members also discussed coordination among the two groups noting that while the geographic scope of each group might be specific the two groups could coordinate on certain issues as needed, including water quality.

Review and Selection of Basin and Bay Expert Science Team nominees

Members discussed the background and areas of expertise for each nominee. After discussion the members ranked their top choices for both the upper and lower groups. The votes were tallied and members agreed that the top 6 nominees for each group would be appointed to serve as BBEST members; with subsequent nominees to be appointed should any of the top 6 not be willing or able to serve.

These individuals were appointed as BBEST members:

Upper BBEST

Zhuping Sheng
Kevin Urbanczyk
Ryan Smith
Gary Bryant
Jeff Bennett
Jack Schmidt

Lower BBEST

David Buzan
Hudson DeYoe
Jude Benavides
Bob Edwards
Carlos Marin
Warren Pulich

Formalize ground rules/operating procedures

This discussion was postponed until the March 2011 meeting.

Other discussion items

There were no other discussion items at this time.

Set next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 29, 2011 to be held in San Antonio, TX.

Potential agenda items include:

- Upper and lower basin themed presentations
- Formalize meeting rules
- Update from the Science Advisory Committee

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time